

REFOCUSING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of citizenship education and the citizens' behaviours that necessitate the need to refocus citizenship education in Nigeria. Such behaviours include corruption, embezzlement, executive indiscipline, pipeline vandalism, hostage taking, youth's restiveness, armed robbery, prostitution, cultism, ritual killings etc. The factors that promote indiscipline behaviours include poor orientation on the value system, strong attachment to paper qualification, the stigmas of poverty, and oppression of people, particularly those from the minority on areas of social, economic and political positions, lack of functional social security etc. The ways to re-engineer citizenship education for effectiveness were highlighted and the roles of educational agencies such as the educational institutions, the religious organizations, social organizations and political parties were emphasized.

Introduction

Great nations of the world were built by citizens who are positively directed at bringing about the social, economic, cultural, political and religious elements of their societies to enviable heights.

There appears to be great departures to this path to progress in the present day Nigeria as majority of the citizens indulge in the acts that negate the principles of honesty, sincerity, hardwork, truthfulness, diligence, patriotism and compassion. The citizens were disenchanted when they observe that those who brazenly flout the law and majestically display their ill-gotten wealth were given honour.

The present situation has no change and indeed, a new ideological framework had to be worked out through a qualitative citizenship education. This will help to stem the tide of the current wave of pipeline vandalism, hostage taking, youths restiveness, cultism, wanton destruction of property, political violence, political thuggery, ritual killings, human trafficking and such other social vices that characterize most Nigerians today.

Given the above scenario, it is obvious that the only things that will help develop the people and the nation to the pride of all is good and culture laden citizenship education.

The main thrusts of this paper include:

- i. To examine the concept 'citizenship education,
- ii. The citizens behaviour that necessitate the need to refocus citizenship education in Nigeria,
- iii. To examine the factors that promote undisciplined behaviour among the citizens and iv. To proffer ways to refocus citizenship education in Nigeria.

The Concept Citizenship Education

Citizenship education is a concept coined from two words 'citizenship' and 'education'. It is imperative that these two words be properly understood in order to understand the term itself.

According to Ajose (1998), citizenship refers to the status of being a citizen. It is a relationship between an individual and a state and it involves such individual's full political membership of the state and his permanent allegiance to it. A citizen is someone who lives in a particular town, country or state and has rights and responsibilities there. Education on the other hand, is seen as the knowledge and skill given to a child or group of learners with a view to making them functional and responsible citizens capable of contributing to the socio-economic, cultural, political religious development of the state.

According to Osuagwu and Ogbonnaya (1997):

Citizenship education is the process of imparting knowledge, values, norms, attitudes and acceptable manner of conduct and behaviour into the citizens of a community or nation aimed towards building a strong and united community or nation

Citizenship education therefore, is an educational programme designed to build in the learners, knowledge and skills that are crucial for full and effective participation in the state.

Ukadike (1999), states that citizenship education curriculum in Nigeria is based on three 'strands' which are social and moral responsibility, political literacy and community development. Good quality citizenship education is not only crucial in its own right but an important component in school improvement and transformation.

Citizenship education in Nigeria, according to Boateng (1994), is premised on the following:

1. To create awareness of the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution and the need for democracy in Nigerian.
2. To create adequate and functional political literacy amongst Nigerian learners
3. To sensitize learners to the functions and obligations of Government,
4. To make learners fully aware of their rights and duties and to respect the rights of others.
5. To assist in the production of responsible, well informed and self-reliant Nigerian citizens.
6. To inculcate right values and altitudes for the development of the individual and the Nigeria society.

It is expected that achievement of these objectives, will enhance increased political literacy among Nigerians, ensure social and political stability, and facilitate national social and economic development.

The Citizens' Behaviour that Necessitate the need to Refocus Citizenship Education in Nigeria

There is no doubting the fact that most Nigerian citizens exhibit unwholesome behaviour that negates national growth and development.

One of such behaviours is the issue of corruption. Corruption has permeated into our social fabric to the extent that nothing works in the society except bribe is offered to one who legitimately ought to do the job for which he/she is paid. This was amplified by Meziobi (1996), when he stated that corruption, embezzlement, squandering of the national economy, political naivete, executive indiscipline are among the behaviours of Nigerians that negate national development. Embezzlement and squandering of the national economy have contributed greatly to the pauperization of the masses. Executive indiscipline is demonstrated when those in authority flagrantly disobey the law, e.g. drive on one way, thus, endangering the lives of others.

According to Shonekan (2005), the indiscipline among Nigeria leaders is well noted in the International Communities as they (the world communities) see extravagance and the siphoning of public funds and thus, reasoning that we are not where we ought to be in terms of national development because of these vices.

The attitude of most citizens to pipeline vandalism in Nigeria is becoming worrisome. Not only do Nigeria loose large chunk of her revenues, the action also leads to lose of lives and property and in most cases, valuable agricultural lands or fishing grounds are destroyed by the accompanying fire or spillage into the water. Other activities include armed robbery, which leads to dispossession of people's property and sometimes loss of lives, terror and fear. Prostitution heightened the spread of deadly diseases such as HIV and AIDS.

Ethnic crises and religious intolerance lead to loss of lives, property and creates refugee status. Isitoah (1996), observed that political violence and political thuggery are twin factors that help to enthrone bad leadership. He noted that, the peoples' reaction to this endemic problem was a kind of political apathy in which they do not make themselves available for political registration exercise and voting in an election with a view to enthroning good leadership.

Other behaviours that negate national development include cultism and ritual killings. On campuses in particular, cultists unleash terror on innocent members of the community and on rival groups when they clash. 'Ritualists' kill or maim innocent citizens with a view to making "blood money". The case of 'Otokutu', near Owerri is still very fresh in minds.

Other manifestation of poor citizenship behaviour include examination malpractice, falsification of results, disregard to public laws and orders, tax evasion, under payment for public

goods, dereliction of duty, 'ghost workers' syndrome, inflation of contract terms, illegal trade in drugs, smuggling of contraband materials among others.

Factors that Encouraged Poor Citizenship Behaviours in Nigeria

The behaviours of most Nigerian citizens that negate national growth and development are seen to stem from the following factors.

- i. Poor orientation in the cherished value system of the society.
- ii. Undue regard to wealth irrespective of how it was acquired.
- iii. Strong attachment to paper qualification in job placement without due consideration to the individual's skills and practical ability,
- iv. The stigma of poverty, which leads people to commit crime and social vices in order to make ends meet.
- v. Lack of functional social security system to take care of the individuals in the society,
- vi. Denial of social, economic, political positions on the premise of minority origin,
- vii. Religious intolerance and ethnic rivalries due to plural nature of Nigerian society
- viii. Lack of adequate knowledge on environmental ethics and values and the need to preserve it.
- ix. Injustices in high places.

These factors among others, have greatly influenced the people to behave in manners that are detrimental to national growth and development.

Ways to Refocus Citizenship Education in Nigeria

The citizens of any nation are developed continually via education with a view to making them contribute positively towards societal development. The world is changing so also man's values and aspirations. In the present world, no nation exists in isolation. This is because the entire world now tends towards a global village with its attendant consequences, both positive and negative.

Consequently, there is the need to properly identify the educational system that will build moral standard, civic responsibility, respect for social order and creation of ideological framework that will help develop a society that stands tall and high in the eye of other communities of the world.. This new world order gives credence to why Fageyinbo (2004), enunciates the goals of citizenship education to include "social awareness, social participation and cooperativeness; social productivity and serviceability; social integration and social responsibilities".

Citizenship education curriculum should be replete with contents drawn from formal and informal social, historical, cultural, political experiences, knowledge, values, norms and skills of the environment that would be necessary to transform the society.

Arising from the above therefore, citizenship education curriculum should include obedience to law and order; maintenance of peace and good neighborliness ways to refrain from acts of violence, destructive tendencies and hostage taking; culture of hard work, diligence, dedication to duty, honesty, truthfulness, openness and self-control, humanness; and political education through the various political processes.

Political education is seen by Isitoah (3996), as the process through which the citizens are mobilized, educated and socialized so that they participate effectively in the governance of the state or nation. The people are mobilized politically when they are made to register in an ongoing voters' registration exercise; when they are encouraged to vote in an election with a view to enthroning good leadership; when they present themselves for census exercises and when they are made to guard jealously their hard earned democracy by not indulging in electoral violence, thuggery during election, falsification of election results or outright cancellation or annulment of an election result adjudged free and fair.

The citizens should be taught how to maintain public goods and property; respect the natural environment by not acting in the manner that is detrimental to the balancing of the ecosystem. Indiscriminate bush burning, illegal or uncontrolled mining of mineral resources and forest clearing for agriculture and other activities have greatly threatened the human environment and the ecosystem. Emphasis should also be on moral rectitude such that indecent dressing is discouraged. Other vices such as bribery, corruption, greed, avarice, insensitivity of the leaders to the feelings of the

masses, insincerity of purpose, injustice, arrogance, inefficiency, deceit, unbridled opportunism among others have been identified by Fageyinbo (2004), as areas that need to be taught in citizenship education.

Citizenship education is all encompassing. The curriculum should also include health education to teach HIV and AIDS, drug abuse, drug trafficking, fake and adulterated drugs, drug administration and control, prostitution and allied activities such as homosexuality. These areas are necessary for the health of the nation so that the citizens are seen to be healthy in order to contribute meaningfully to national development. Thank God NAFDAC is doing pretty well in this direction.

Nigeria is a multi-cultural society. There is no doubting the fact that differences will exist both in economic, cultural, political and religious spheres. Such differences may tend to tear the nation apart if not properly handled. In this wise, there is the need to teach cultural integration through such agencies and institutions as National Youths Service Corps, Unity Schools, cross regional employment and posting, promotion of cultural festivals, sports and the likes.

The culture of respect for the elders, peaceful and cooperative living as against militancy and restiveness should be encouraged through education. To be included also should be equal access to national wealth, equal opportunity to political positions, equal access to education and job opportunities.

The people should be taught how to critically evaluate regional, national and international issues with a view to adopting those that will promote their well-being. Such evaluation can be made possible when the people are exposed to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provided by the Internet.

The Roles of Educational Agencies in Citizenship Education

A well-packaged citizenship education curriculum can only be relevant in the lives of the people if it is properly delivered by the relevant educational agencies, both formal and informal,

The foremost in the education of the citizens on a broad base is the educational institutions. Training from this institution spans through the three levels which include the primary, the secondary and the tertiary institutions.

These institutions pass the core values of citizenship education to the learners who later influence the general society. To do this effectively, the teachers at the various levels of our educational institutions should be well trained and remunerated so that the essential elements of citizenship education would be taught without grudges. Further to that, the facilities necessary to provide qualitative citizenship education should be made available in all institutions of learning.

The roles of religious organizations in citizenship education cannot be overemphasized. Religious bodies should endeavour to teach love, respect, obedience, decency, truthfulness, honesty, respect for human life, ethical standards, and moral rejuvenation among others.

The political parties have the moral obligation to teach the citizenry all elements of election and electoral process with a view to enthroning good leadership.

The mass media should inform, educate and correct misconceptions and project cultural values that are progressive in society. The influence of the mass media was so great that Alozie (2005), stated that the mass media is the bridge in the gulf between the urban and rural communities and between developed and developing societies. This is done through advertising and social mobilization and modernization of Nigeria nation by relaying useful information on social issues and values to the people. In today's world, the mass media, especially the television and the Internet are the closest sources of information on world events, issues and activities.

The family no doubt, is the foundation of education in society. The child should be taught the family values as well as the values of the immediate environment.

The Clubs, Associations and various Organizations should teach team spirit, cooperation, hardwork, endurance, patience, peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, accountability, services etc. Such organizations include Boys Scout, Girls Brigades, Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, the Red Cross, Special Marshals, and etcetera.

Other agencies may include Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC), the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) etc.

A well packaged and properly delivered citizenship education will help to eliminate a number of vices including religious and ethnic crises, political violence, cultism, examination malpractices, and youths restiveness. Then the citizens would be mobilized for national development.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the concept, 'citizenship education' and examined the behaviours of most citizens that necessitate refocusing on citizenship education in Nigeria. Such behaviours include corruption, embezzlement, executive indiscipline, pipeline vandalism, hostage taking, youth's restiveness, etc.

The ingredients of qualitative citizenship education were identified and they include the economic, political, religious, cultural, social and health spheres of life.

The roles of educational agencies in re-engineering qualitative citizenship education for national growth and development and improvement of the well being of the people have been stated. A well cultured citizen will be able to develop a society that is the envy of all.

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